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Last Minute Christmas Gifts for the Sports Fan

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR ARETE
December 19, 1996

Attention Kmart Shoppers. Today I will offer some last minute Christmas items for the Sports Fan on your gift list.

I was surprised when I ventured out to the bookstores last week to peruse the shelves for gift ideas to find how many non-book items could be found there. First and foremost were calendars, both wall and desk calendars, and according to the calendar department the leading sport in America is golf.

Among the eighteen desk calendars available seven featured golf. Four of these offered golf tips, although I would guess that if you need golf lessons from a calendar you are already in some trouble. Harvey Pennock's Little Red Book Desk Calendar was displayed away from the others. Pennock's publishers apparently don't want him associated with such lesser educational tools as "Golf Tip A Day" and "Golf Magazine's Daily Golf Tips and Trivia" desk calendars.

Among the non-golf desk calendars are those dealing with fly fishing ("365 Days of Fly Fishing") and lesser forms of fishing; several formats involving quotations and facts for the day; and then of course of "The Official fill in the blank calendar: Major League Baseball, NBA, ESPN, SI Multi-Sport, or SI Pro and College Football and the NFL. To cover it all you can simply opt for the "365 Sports Facts-A-Year" Desk Calendar.

In Wall Calendars the entire line-up changes. There is only one golf calendar, proving I suppose the golfers are for the most part off the wall. Sports on the wall but not on the desk include sailing, running, soccer, hockey, bicycling, figure skating, and surfing. There are two baseball wall calendars, one from the Library of Congress exhibit and one from the Ken Burns Docudrama. Another oddity is "Reel Men" which offers humor about fishing, a wonderful gift for those who would doubt the existence of such a thing.

There are also books still available in most bookstores and sports tomes are a major item, especially at Christmas time.

There are some wonderful sports photography and art books but they generally carry a large price tag. Among the best this year are "Jackie Robinson: An Intimate Portrait" by Rachel Robinson with Lee Daniels. Over 300 photos, half of them off-field, give a

well-rounded portrait of this major figure in baseball from the unique perspective of Rachel, his partner in Baseball's Great Experiment.

"Olympic Portraits" by Anne Leibovitz is a marvelous collection of black and white photos of the American Olympic team taken between 1993 and 1996. Leibovitz is considered by many to be the leading photo-artist working in America today and this collection will serve to enhance that reputation.

Again as with Desk Calendars there is a bevy of golf books, from the wit and wisdom of Harvey Pennock, now with four volumes available, to Jack Nicklaus' "Golf My Way," offering instructions from the Golden Bear. Apparently a bit slow to react the Tiger Woods industry has only two books on the shelves, Tim Rosaforte's "Tiger Woods: The Making of a Champion" and SI's "The Making of a Champion" featuring their "Sportsman of the Year" in words and pictures. Four more Tiger books will appear in the next few months. As for me I am waiting for the official Phil Knight version.

Golf books of substance include a wonderful collection of photos and prose in "The Greatest of Them All: The Legend of Bobby Jones," offering essays by Alistair Cooke, Dave Anderson and Ben Crenshaw among others. Also on the master is "The Life and Times of Bobby Jones: Portrait of a Gentleman."

Another American Sports Legend featured in several new books is Mickey Mantle. David Faulkner's, "The Last Hero," and "A Hero All His Life: A Memoir by the Mantle Family," written by Mantle's wife and three sons, are among the best.

On football there are the usual accounts by and about coaches and players, with Keith Dunnavant's "Coach: The Life of Paul 'Bear' Bryant" leading the way. John Feinstein's "A Civil War: Army vs. Navy, A Year Inside College Football's Purest Rivalry," has received highly favorable reviews. "Quarterblack: Shattering the NFL Myth, The Autobiography of Doug Williams" with Bruce Hunter has just hit the stores, and hopefully will live up to its subject.

In addition there are a mass of books on Fishing, too many of them fly fishing, with "A Different Angle: Fly Fishing Stories by Women," edited by Holly Morris being an interesting collection which includes a story by E. Annie Proulx and one by

Lin Sutherland with the witty title, "A River Runs Over Me." It is one of several books dealing with women and sport from Seal Press of Seattle.

In other words there is a mass of good reading for the sports fan at your house regardless of age, sex, or sportual orientation.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau wishing you a Merry Christmas and reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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